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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 24 April 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. CEAUSU

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 6) (continued)

Second periodic report of Venezuela (E/1990/6/Add.19); core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.3); list of issues (E/C.12/Q/VEN/1); background document (E/C.12/CA/VEN/1); written replies of the Government of Venezuela (document without a symbol distributed at the meeting in Spanish only) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Venezuela resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation of Venezuela and the Committee to continue their discussion.

3. Mr. AVENDAÑO TIMAURY (Venezuela), referring to item 4 of the list of issues, said that individuals could invoke international instruments before the courts, as was evident from the case law of the Supreme Court. He added that the National Assembly was now engaged in bringing national law into conformity with the texts of the international instruments.

4. Mr. TEXIER asked what had been done to implement the March 2001 decision of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights setting a 15-day deadline for the Venezuelan authorities to reach a decision on the future of 287 Colombian refugees in Venezuela. Given that the right of asylum and the status of refugee were recognized under the Venezuelan Constitution, was there anything to prevent Venezuela from ratifying the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons? Finally, in the case of people waiting for a decision to be taken on whether to grant them refugee status, did Venezuela plan to adopt a law establishing a mechanism to examine such applications and to grant refugee status? He emphasized the importance of doing so, since people holding temporary documents did not have access to economic, social and cultural rights, or to social security, and could not attend school.

5. Mr. AVENDAÑO TIMAURY (Venezuela) replied that on several occasions Venezuela had had to cope with inflows of Colombian migrants fleeing the violence in their country, and had provided them with the medical care and the humanitarian assistance required in such situations. Once the crisis had passed, those persons had voluntarily returned to their country of origin. The Venezuelan delegation, he repeated, had every wish to be transparent, and his country would shortly provide additional information about the non-ratification of the international instruments already mentioned and on the question of the 287 Colombian refugees mentioned by Mr. Texier.

Article 6: Right to work

6. Mr. DURAN (Venezuela) referred to unemployment trends and drew members' attention to the two tables annexed to the written replies furnished by his Government. The tables, containing updated figures broken down in one table by sex and in the other by sex and age group, showed the fall in unemployment and the corresponding rise in the number of jobs in the formal sector of the economy between 1997 and 1999.

7. Ms. TORRES DIAZ (Venezuela) added that there were no special arrangements for protecting workers in the informal sector. However, they could be treated as "independent workers" whose status was governed by the Basic Labour Act, giving them the right to organize and to conclude agreements similar to collective agreements. It should be noted that under the new Constitution the State had an obligation to secure respect for the rights of all workers without discrimination.

8. With regard to the employment of people with handicaps, the 1993 law on the integration of disabled persons required public and private enterprises with over 50 employees to employ a number of disabled persons equivalent to at least 2 per cent of their total workforce.

9. In addition, new rules would shortly be adopted to prevent accidents at work and thus provide better protection for workers. In the event of occupational disease or accident, workers would be paid compensation.

10. As for the place of women on the labour market, she welcomed the efforts of the National Women's Institute, the successor to the National Women's Council. Among its goals was the promotion of women's employment in all fields of activity. It was also conducting a campaign to promote equality between men and women with regard to the right to work, job vacancies and remuneration. Moreover, in view of the high number of women holding posts of responsibility, including Government posts, one could conclude that they were not discriminated against on the labour market, ability and experience being the factors taken into account. In that respect, it was now an offence under the Basic Labour Act to discriminate in employment on grounds of sex.

11. Mr. GRISSA asked for more information on child labour, which was not mentioned in the report. Up to what age were children required to attend school, and what was the minimum age for employment? Finally, there was a contradiction between paragraphs 37 (f), 41 and 43 of the report concerning free choice of employment and the restriction placed on that freedom by the trade unions. What was the real situation? Was there really free choice of employment, independently of the authority of the trade unions, or were they all-powerful in the matter?

12. Mr. THAPALIA said there were consistent indications that unemployment was speedily rising and that women were among those most seriously affected. In its concluding observations on the third periodic report of Venezuela (A/52/38/Rev.1), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had found it worrying that the reduction in the number of civil servants had resulted in women losing their jobs, which forced them to look for work on the

informal labour market and to take low-paid jobs. In those circumstances, what specific steps were being taken by the Government to enable women to exercise fully their right to work? He also requested details on unemployment patterns; the extent of long-term unemployment; the percentage of refugees, young people and handicapped persons among the unemployed; and any programmes of technical and vocational training which were being carried out to help unemployed people in those categories.

13. Mr. TEXIER also inquired whether the Government had implemented a policy of training or access to employment to combat youth unemployment, and whether the delegation agreed with the figures published by the Central Office of Statistics and Computing, according to which the rate of unemployment at the end of the first quarter of 2000 had been 15.3 per cent. With regard to dismissals, he would like to know how they were regulated under Venezuelan law and whether the judicial authorities or the Ministry of Labour had some control over the terms of dismissal.

14. Mr. MALINVERNI said he was struck by two statements in paragraph 37 of the report (E/1990/6/Add.19): on the one hand, that the workers did not make optimal use of the opportunities offered them for training, education and apprenticeships, and on the other hand, that the lack of information on the labour market and the lack of resources were obstacles to the geographical mobility of workers. That was a surprising thing to say in a country where the unemployment rate was relatively high. What was the explanation for those two phenomena, and what steps had been taken to deal with them?

15. Ms. TORRES DIAZ (Venezuela) explained that the law prohibited the employment of children under 14. Minors aged between 14 and 16 could work, but only with the permission of their legal guardian. In any case, work by minors was strictly regulated, in the child's own interest. Minors received a programme of education and training supplied by a national institution, and the law provided that during such apprenticeship periods, in either the public or the private sector, a minor should be paid, but at a level of remuneration different from the minimum wage in force for workers in general.

16. With regard to dismissals, the law on social security which was now in preparation provided for compensation, whether or not the dismissal was justified. A worker who considered his dismissal to be unlawful could appeal to the labour court, which would rule on whether it was justified. If it decided that the dismissal was unlawful, the worker must be reinstated immediately and must receive compensation in an amount corresponding to the total sum of wages outstanding for the period of the appeal proceedings. The amount of the compensation was also calculated according to the length of time the worker had been employed in the enterprise. The notice period was taken into account for the purpose of calculating length of service. Finally, some workers, including trade union representatives and pregnant women, enjoyed a degree of immunity against dismissal.

17. Mr. DURAN (Venezuela) explained that the unemployment figures given in the second periodic report of Venezuela were correct, because they came from the Central Coordination and

Planning Office. The rate quoted by the delegation represented preliminary data for February 2001. Members of the Committee need not doubt the figures supplied, as Venezuela had considerable experience of compiling unemployment statistics through detailed surveys.

18. Mr. GRISSA said he was sorry the replies given by the delegation were incomplete. According to information in his possession, over 60 per cent of children enrolled in education left school before the age of 15. There must, surely, be a fear that those children were either on the street or at work.

19. Ms. HANSON (Venezuela) replied that the delegation would supply more detailed information on the question at a later stage.

Articles 7 and 8: Right to just and favourable conditions of work; trade union rights

20. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation to reply to questions 18 to 23 of the list of issues (E/C.12/Q/VEN/1).

21. Ms. TORRES DIAZ (Venezuela) said that the Basic Labour Act provided for the minimum wage to be fixed in three different ways: through consultation within a tripartite commission consisting of representatives of the Government, employees and employers, through collective bargaining at the regional or national level, or by presidential decree. In all cases, it was fixed according to the cost of a basket of household goods and on the basis of statistics supplied by the Central Bank and the National Economic Council. A presidential decree of 3 July 2000, following consultation with the most representative bodies, including the Central Bank and the trade unions, had set the minimum wage in urban areas at 144,000 bolivars. However, the law made provision for different minimum rates of pay according to geographical area, the number of hours worked, the workforce and the nature of the work. Moreover, enterprises which had established themselves in an area affected by a natural disaster were exempt from applying the general regime. Inspectors from the Ministry of Labour carried out regular inspections and questioned employees in order to ensure compliance with the minimum conditions laid down in the Basic Labour Act or in the relevant decrees.

22. As for involuntary unemployment, the new law on social security provided for a benefit payable to all unemployed people. The restrictions in the old law had been lifted, and the State had released funds to pay the benefit in the informal sector. With regard to the conditions of employment of foreigners in Venezuela, under the law all workers enjoyed the same conditions irrespective of their nationality. Nevertheless, a ceiling was set on the proportion of foreigners who could be employed in an enterprise, and restrictions were imposed on the appointment of foreigners to certain posts. There were, however, exemptions from those provisions, for example where refugees were concerned.

23. As for the representation of workers, the law recognized that all workers had the right to be represented. However, foreigners could only become trade union leaders once they had lived in Venezuela for 10 years. The trade unions represented all workers vis-à-vis the administrative and judicial authorities in defending the rights derived from the Basic Labour Act, the Constitution, the various conventions and all other relevant provisions. All negotiations concerning working conditions must be conducted between the employers and the trade union

representing an absolute majority of the workers. Of course, a number of different trade unions might join together to obtain such a majority, and thus be in a position to ensure that employers respected the conditions of employment. Finally, in reply to question 23 on strike statistics, she said that in the course of 2000 there had been only 31 strikes, and conciliation had often enabled disputes to be settled.

24. Mr. SADI asked what criteria were applied by the tripartite commission which was responsible for fixing the minimum wage, and whether Parliament had any say in the matter. He thought the minimum wage was grossly inadequate, in both urban and rural areas, given that a family needed 230,000 bolivars in order to live decently. Even more seriously, was it true that the minimum wage was not always observed in the informal sector, in which half the economically active population worked? As for working conditions, Venezuela did have appropriate regulations, but apparently the inspectors of the Ministry of Labour made only infrequent checks on the application of the regulations. What was the true position?

25. Mr. RIEDEL expressed the same concern. Although the law which laid down the safety and health conditions to be observed in the various areas of employment had been in force since 1986, the necessary implementing decrees had not been adopted. That being so, what steps could be taken against a factory which did not comply with the rules on safety and health at work? Could it be shut down?

26. According to paragraph 72 of the report, workers were not allowed to sleep at their work sites, except for those who had to remain there for work reasons or on account of force majeure. Under what circumstances would force majeure apply? Paragraph 74 stated that if the workplace was 30 or more kilometres from the worker's place of residence, the employer was bound to provide free transport. That was a very praiseworthy arrangement, but did it apply in all cases, or only in the oil industry? Who was responsible for ensuring it was carried out? Finally, he inquired whether foreigners received the same safety-at-work protection as Venezuelan citizens.

27. Mr. GRISSA said he was puzzled by the information in paragraphs 75 and 76 of the report. According to paragraph 75, enterprises employing more than 500 workers who had to work and reside in an unpopulated place more than 50 kilometres from the nearest populated place had to provide sanitary housing for them. What was the position with workers residing 49 kilometres away from the nearest populated place? Paragraph 76 of the report stated in addition that enterprises employing more than 1,000 workers in sites more than 100 kilometres away from a town with hospital services, or more than 50 kilometres if the services could not be used in an emergency because there were no means of communication, must maintain a health centre or establishment equipped to provide health care. Did that mean that an enterprise employing 999 workers would have no legal obligation to do so? What would happen if an accident occurred at a workplace in the middle of the Amazon? How could such an apparently meaningless law be applied? Furthermore, since there were no statistics in the report on accidents at work, including fatalities, he hoped the delegation could supply some details of those, and of accidents in mining and forestry.

28. Ms. FRANCIA (Venezuela) replied that her delegation was not attending the Committee meeting in order to defend laws adopted by the State party which some people found pointless.

29. The CHAIRPERSON said States parties did not, of course, have to defend the usefulness of laws in force on their territory, but experts were nevertheless free to state critical opinions when they saw fit. He hoped the dialogue could be continued in a constructive manner, in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

30. Mr. REIDEL said that a spirit of constructive dialogue also involved States parties admitting that there were problems in some areas, and that progress was still needed. It was often more useful, in a dialogue, to admit the existence of a problem than to avoid questions. The Committee was fully aware of the scale of the obligations arising from the Covenant and the difficulty for States parties in complying with them, and it would not therefore be surprising for a State to admit to encountering difficulties in certain areas.

31. Mr. TEXIER assured the delegation of Venezuela that the Committee had every intention of carrying on a dialogue. He was also glad to see that article 91 of the Venezuelan Constitution mirrored exactly the wording of article 7 of the Covenant, stipulating that the purpose of the minimum wage was to ensure a decent living for all workers and their families. It seemed, however, that in Venezuela the minimum wage was not enough to meet basic needs. As of 1 May 2000, according to the information available, it had been 144,000 bolivars in the towns and 129,000 bolivars in the countryside, whereas the basket of household goods, in a narrow sense, was priced at 202,000 bolivars and in a broad sense at about 600,000. Had any steps been taken to close the gap between the minimum wage and basic needs?

32. He also asked the delegation what was the weekly or daily legal duration of work corresponding to the minimum wage, and whether overtime was paid at a higher rate. Could the delegation also state whether Venezuela complied with the labour law principle of "equal pay for equal work" and, if not, say whether any measures were planned to rectify the situation?

33. He wondered whether Venezuela had any policy for preventing accidents at work and punishing those responsible, since safety at work was always linked to a dual policy of prevention and prosecution. Were labour inspectors or courts empowered to decide to shut down a workplace at which there was a risk of fatal accidents because safety rules were not complied with?

34. On the question of trade union freedom, he was particularly concerned with the referendum held in December 2000, on a decision of the national electoral council, to enable all citizens to state their view on the question of trade union elections. The referendum had been much criticized and had been ruled contrary to the ILO Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize. Some members of the Committee even felt it might be contrary to the spirit of article 8 of the Covenant, because it constituted external interference in a matter which should be the sole prerogative of the trade unions. What was the delegation's view on that? It was now known that trade union leaders in Venezuela had been dismissed from office following the referendum, and that a new draft law on trade union freedoms was under consideration. Had it been adopted yet? Lastly, could the delegation state what specific measures had been taken, if any, to ensure equal pay as between men and women?

35. Mr. MALINVERNI asked the delegation to state how long unemployment benefit lasted and what provision there was when the entitlement came to an end. What proportion of the worker's most recent salary did the unemployment benefit represent?

36. Mr. AHMED noted that in Venezuela the minimum wage was fixed by presidential decree which the Congress had to implement and was not allowed to amend. Could the delegation also explain why Venezuela had excluded domestic workers and concierges from its minimum wage legislation?

37. Ms. TORRES DIAZ (Venezuela) explained that the minimum wage was fixed according to the cost of a basket of household goods. Contrary to what was said in the report, the basket had recently been priced at 144,000 bolivars, not 129,000. A commission was now engaged in revising the minimum wage in order to bring it into line with workers' actual purchasing power. The minimum wage was compulsory throughout the national territory, and corresponded to 40 hours of work a week, divided into five days of eight hours each. The Constitution expressly prohibited night work exceeding 35 hours a week, or overtime. Even though time schedules were often exceeded, it was not always possible to assess the number of hours actually worked, and as a result hours worked above the limit were not necessarily paid.

38. Venezuela respected the principle of "equal pay for equal work". The disparities recorded in practice between women's and men's pay were not due to discrimination against women, but to the worker's length of service in the enterprise.

39. The law provided for administrative and civil penalties, and even criminal penalties, for failure by an employer to comply with safety and health rules. The social security system provided that the employer had to compensate a worker for an industrial accident or work-related illness, even if consequent upon an act of negligence by the worker, but on condition they were not intentionally caused. The Basic Labour Act entitled any worker or member of his or her family to apply to the court for compensation for moral or physical damage, and where appropriate the court could find the State, as well as the employer, liable.

40. As for termination indemnities, under the law domestic workers were excluded from some forms of social security coverage. The law applied only to contributors of working age. Termination indemnities were paid for 18 months, and represented 60 per cent of the last salary earned. A draft law was under consideration to extend the scope of the law in question to the whole country.

41. She explained that the term "concierge" applied not only to hotel concierges and porters, but also to people engaged in maintenance work on business premises. Concierges also received a minimum wage, calculated to take account of part of the value of the service accommodation made available to them by the employer. On the other hand, it was correct that the minimum wage did not apply to domestic workers, because they were treated as if self-employed.

42. As for breaches of safety-at-work rules, she emphasized that labour inspectors were bound to visit workplaces once a quarter to make sure that the minimum conditions prescribed in the law on industrial safety were observed. In the event of an infringement, the enterprise was summonsed and compensation proceedings instituted, which might result in the employer being

ordered to pay a fine. There were no circumstances in which an enterprise employing 1,000 workers could dismiss a worker in order to evade a legal obligation. The referendum held in 1999 had not infringed trade union freedoms. The Venezuelan Constitution had established that work and education were the two essential motors of the economy. Her country had changed from being a representative to being a participatory society, and the Constitution stipulated that any matter affecting society as a whole must be put to the people for approval.

43. She explained that the draft law on trade union freedoms was under discussion in the National Assembly. With regard to the steps taken to guarantee equal pay as between men and women, there was no actual difference in pay for the same work. In the event of a dispute, it was possible to apply to the labour inspectorate or the competent courts. Moreover, the law provided that any reduction in pay was a legitimate reason for the worker to terminate the employment contract. A termination on such grounds would be regarded as unfair dismissal on the part of the employer, who would then have to pay a fine under the Basic Labour Act.

44. Mr. GRISSA said he was glad to learn that a company employing 1,000 people could not dismiss anyone without incurring certain legal obligations. What about enterprises employing 800 people, who would not be covered by the law in question? If their employees were working on a site in the middle of the jungle, what would happen if there was an accident?

Articles 9 and 10 of the Covenant: Right to social security and protection for families, mothers and children

45. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation of Venezuela to reply to the questions on articles 9 and 10 of the Covenant.

46. Ms. TORRES DIAZ (Venezuela) explained that the law on social insurance, which had been in force for many years, provided for benefits to be paid for maternity, invalidity, retirement, occupational illness and accidents at work, as well as family allowances and survivors' benefits. There was a draft law on social security containing new provisions consonant with the principles laid down in the Venezuelan Constitution, based on the principles of free and universal access. The retirement pension scheme was governed at the national level by two legal texts, one for the public sector and the other for the private sector. However, the schemes provided for in most of the collective agreements or industry agreements in independent institutions such as universities were different from those required by law and which were adapted to particular sectors or enterprises. The retirement age was normally 60 for men and 55 for women who had the required length of service and had contributed for the prescribed length of time. Under the new draft law on social security, the retirement age was set initially at 60 for both men and women, subject to a minimum period of contribution. The pensionable age would be gradually increased to 65. Workers were covered by social security, whether they were Venezuelan citizens or foreigners, but the law on social insurance excluded temporary and casual workers and members of the national armed forces. For some categories such as drivers and craftsmen, membership in a social security scheme was optional. Under the existing system, those wishing to draw benefits must belong to an association which paid the employer's contribution. However, the new draft law on social security gave social protection to all workers, whatever their function or job.

47. With regard to the ILO recommendations on maternity protection, the reform introduced in 1990 had extended the benefits payable to women. In the first place, women were entitled to four and a half months' maternity leave, instead of three months as before. In the second place, pregnant women and women who adopted children enjoyed special protection: after the birth or adoption, they were guaranteed to keep their jobs for a year. The ILO recommendations on extending maternity benefits at the national level were taken into account in the draft law on social security.

48. As for the payment of benefits to claimants living abroad, she explained that the arrangements for payment had been changed in 1993. In future, it was the banks which would be required to pay the benefits to the claimants, who were scattered among more than 20 countries.

49. Ms. LÓPEZ DE PENSO (Venezuela) explained that in order to deal with the problem of domestic violence against women and children, the National Assembly was planning a thoroughgoing reform of the Criminal Code, including the provision that charges for sexual violence would be dropped if the victim agreed to marry her attacker. Women victims of violence were given medical and psychological care under pilot rehabilitation programmes. As for violence against children, including adopted children, an organic law had recently been promulgated to protect the physical and moral integrity of young children and adolescents. It guaranteed equality of treatment and prevented discrimination of any kind. The National Children's Institute, like other institutions involved with minors, played an important role. Workshops were held at the national level to rehabilitate child victims of violence, in the context of programmes geared to education and to both mental and physical health.

50. In reply to the question in paragraph 30 of the list of issues (E/C.12/Q/VEN/1), she said that street children, now called "children of the motherland" in Venezuela, were catered for by programmes for gradual rehabilitation implemented not only by public authorities, but also by private enterprises. The principles laid down in the Constitution, including equality of treatment in health and education, must be applied to the social protection of children.

51. Mr. AHMED, returning to the question of violence against women, asked for details of the new law on the subject adopted by Venezuela: in the event of rape, did the presumed victim always have to undergo a medical examination within 48 hours of the attack? He mentioned a clause in the Criminal Code whereby any person suspected of rape could escape sentence by a court by marrying the victim before sentence was pronounced. He asked whether that provision, which was humiliating for the victim and could encourage rape, was still in force. Finally, did the Criminal Code punish marital rape?

52. Mr. SADI asked whether domestic violence had decreased since the entry into force in 1999 of the law on violence against women. Had there been any change in the attitude of the police towards victims? Concerning the situation of street children, who were prone to become involved in begging, theft and prostitution, he felt the programmes in place were not sufficient for resolving a problem on such a serious scale. He thought more vigorous measures were needed to tackle the phenomenon at the root.

53. Mr. MARTYNOV inquired what percentage of people were covered by the social security system, and whether it had increased since 1998. What steps had been taken to deal

with trafficking in children from other Latin American countries? Finally, did the Government plan to amend the article in the Basic Labour Act which, exceptionally, allowed children aged between 12 and 14 to work, contrary to the relevant ILO convention?

54. Mr. PILLAY asked the delegation to answer the questions in paragraphs 26 to 28 of the list of issues (E/C.12/Q/VEN/1), which were based on comments by ILO. Had the situation with the social security system improved? Had the Government taken steps to extend maternity benefits to all women workers? Would the draft law on social security tackle all those problems?

55. Ms. BARAHONA RIERA asked how article 88 of the new Constitution, which guaranteed housewives the right to social security, would be implemented in the new law on social security. Would such women have to contribute to the social security scheme? Concerning the reform of the Criminal Code, she would like to know if there had been any studies of the effects of the provision by which prosecutions for sexual attacks could be dropped if there was a marriage. Was there a draft law to modify that provision?

56. Mr. GRISSA inquired about the true situation of street children. Children were a country's future and should be protected to the full.

57. Mr. RODRIGUEZ CEDEÑO (Venezuela) said that Venezuela was not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, but had acceded to the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, which recognized the same rights and obligations as did the Convention. The most important point was that those rights and obligations should be recognized in order to make it possible to protect refugees. The 287 Colombians who had requested political asylum were entitled to do so, which did not mean that their applications must automatically be granted. The Venezuelan Government was bound to consider their request, and had set up a national commission for that purpose.

58. Ms. LOPEZ DE PENSO (Venezuela) said that her country had recently adopted a law on violence against women, and intended to introduce mechanisms to prevent and punish acts of domestic violence. By emphasizing the need to preserve the integrity and dignity of the victims and their mental and psychological well-being, the law raised awareness of the problem. "Reception centres" had been established to provide temporary shelter to persons claiming to be victims of that type of violence. They could also seek intervention by the police, and when the police investigated facts of that nature they were obliged, under the Code of Criminal Procedure, to notify the public prosecutor within 24 hours. That innovative procedure, which was based on an immediate hearing of the parties, had the advantage of providing a rapid solution to conflicts.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES ARISING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (agenda item 5)

Draft statement on poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (HR/CESCR/NONE/2001/6)

59. Mr. HUNT (Rapporteur) introduced the draft statement on poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which he had prepared at the request of the Bureau. The aim of the draft declaration was to define, on the conceptual level, the relationship between the Covenant and poverty elimination, which had become a primary objective for many States and international organizations, so that all the players could draw up practical programmes. He invited members of the Committee to submit amendments, and expressed the hope that the draft declaration could be adopted during the current session.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.